1: Petrullo E-S (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

captive turtles; and a few human beings were sitting or lying in the midst of all this, and exposed to all of the elements.

Among primitive people news travels rapidly. Landaeta, in this case, received me with the air of one who was expecting a visitor and it turned out that my reputation had preceded me. Not only did he know that I was in the country, but also why I was there. He was expecting me in order to teach me his ways and the ways of his people, and to learn my ways and the ways of my people. To him I was a shaman, no different than himself, who knew their mother goddess intimately and who was perhaps related to the gods themselves. He asked me for pictures of Kuma and Kuma's land. I soon discovered that he was under the illusion that in some way I was on intimate terms with the Yaruro's god.

A little to one side a branch was planted in the sand, and lying in its thin shade a girl was waiting to die. She was burning with fever and delirious. Her people were hovering over her, without being able to alleviate her sufferings or to help her to the end of life. Her malady was a new one to them, passed on by the newcomers to their world, and therefore they had no remedy for it.

The sick girl was Landaeta's daughter and as one physician to another, he came to me requesting that I save his daughter from death. Being neither physician, magician, nor priest, I responded to his plea the best way I could. Lest I be drawn into a situation of attempting to cure a sick person without adequate knowledge of the sickness or its remedy, I moved off the same day to seek other Yaruros; but only after Landaeta had promised that he would commence his journey in the cool of the evening and rejoin me several days later.

It has often been said that to accept the promise of a primitive Indian is to abandon all thought of its being remembered. Perhaps it would seem that I put too much faith and trust in my friends in sitting down to wait for them to join me. But a promise made and accepted without coercion is to the Indian one that has to be kept; and, as in many other cases of my experience with primitive people, this one was kept.

That the feeling of suspicion had not disappeared completely was proven by the attitude of another hunting group which I visited. I went alone among them, and unarmed. On my arrival in a canoe, carrying no equipment, they sullenly warned me to keep away from them and their camp. However, good will is never unproductive, and when they saw that I merely squatted on the sands, shared my tobacco with them, said nothing, and then cheerfully paddled away, their hearts must have melted, for several days later they too had joined my band of friends, later becoming among those most deeply attached to me.

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

841 piece of cloth. (Among the peoples of the Xingu in Brazil she is made to wear her hair over her face, and she is kept from the sight of men.) Whether during this period special initiatory rites are performed I was not able to find out. This part of Yaruro culture is considered to be in the women's domain, and, being a man, I was kept from delving into it.

123
841

MARRIAGE

527 The Yaruros are poor in social ceremonies. Anciently they may have practiced a great many of them but today social life is comparatively simple.

885 When a boy is ready to marry he may approach his father, or as
791 a matter of fact, the father may approach the son. In any case he is
584 sent to the shaman, who informs him that now he should be ready to assume the duties of a man, and proceeds to instruct him in the nature of those duties. He is told that he must love and cherish his
[183] wife; supply her plentifully with food, clothing, ornaments, and children; that he must never use harsh words toward her and that
[577] he must take care of her when she is sick; that he must never quarrel with her family, with whom he is expected to live; and of particular importance, that he must remember to take care of his father-in-law and mother-in-law. All of this is ordained by Kuma.

584 The shaman will then approach the boy's uncle who has a marriage-
585 able daughter. No special ceremony seems to take place. The boy
791 simply goes to live with the wife's family and assumes his duties of taking care of her as well as of his parents-in-law.

SICKNESS AND DEATH

751 Not much material was available on sickness. It must be remem-
757 bered that the Yaruros have been in contact with European ideas for several centuries and that they understand the use of medicine for the cure of a specific illness.

753 Nevertheless, Kiberoh, the evil night spirit, is in some fashion asso-
756 ciated with illness. If Kiberoh enters the body of a person, the latter will become ill. In such cases the only cure is the intercession of Kuma, who can be called upon to help by the shaman or musico, a term adapted from the Spanish to describe the singing shaman.

755 The sick person is laid on the ground with his head pointing to the east. At sundown the shaman will stand to the north of the sick person and will proceed to sing, accompanying himself with the
[841] rattle. The rest of the people, with the exception of any woman in her menstrual period, line up behind the shaman and sing and dance as they generally do during any of the shamanistic performances. If they indulge in any dancing, however, they do not go around a

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

a pole. In general, therefore, organized play for child or adult is hardly present.

WAR

The Yaruros did not speak much of war. None of their legends make any reference to it except in one case which says that they were killed by the "Racionales" and that they retaliated.[6] The known historical sources say nothing except Father Gumilla's account, which makes reference to the pacification of the "Saruri."

MORAL ATTITUDES

On the subject of conduct, the outlook on life and the organization of life values, we must distinguish between theory and practice. The former grows out of reflection and represents the intellectualization of the universe as seen without much reference to practical life. The second springs from the social and economic relationships and the fusing of individual ends and purposes into the purposes and ends of the group, whereas the first is not strictly controlled by custom and practical needs. Both exist among the Yaruros. For the first we have to turn to the shaman, who in addition to being a religious leader, a savant, is also a moralist; and for the second we turn to the entire social group and need to watch it in its behavior.

In reading over the early account of the aborigines of the region, among which we must presumably include Yaruros, we gather that their moral concepts were different from those of the Christians, but perhaps neither better nor worse in practice. It must be doubted, however, whether a number of practices attributed to the Yaruros are authentic. We read, for instance, that a number of the aborigines were patricides, and we are given a picture of the male children, on reaching adolescence, rising against the fathers through lust for the mother. Patricide is an abhorrent crime and the motive behind it is equally abhorrent. It is to be doubted whether patricide, or even lesser acts, such as beating the father, were ever practiced, except in sporadic cases such as may occur in any society. It hardly seems possible that women were the cause of it when it is known, as it is known today, that mating and extramarital relationships are very strictly controlled by tradition and social training. Disregarding, therefore, such allusions to the moral life of the primitive peoples of the Orinoco, let us turn to our informants for an understanding of their present mode of life. The

[6] It would appear probable that the nomadic Yaruros were too weak to ever develop any warlike spirit.

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

The first fact that holds our attention is that Yaruros are strongly ethically conscious. Every shamanistic performance is the means for the propagation of ethical teachings. The shaman, or as the Yaruros believe, the gods and their dead ancestors speaking through the shaman, admonish various individuals and lay down the law for proper conduct. They hold the threat also that misconduct will be displeasing to the mother goddess and as a result life with her will not be as pleasant as it would be if they followed her precepts in this world.

According to the Yaruro philosophy the world is, by its nature, good and it was created by Kuma as a good thing. If any evil exists it has been introduced by men, who have forgotten or come to disregard the laws laid down by the goddess. The world, if unsullied by men, is a perfect integration of the elements which function for the good of mankind. Unfortunately, at times men will disturb the structure. There is implied in this the existence of free will for mankind, since it can change or disturb what was created by Kuma. And if we have recourse to the legends, we find that perhaps the lower animals have free will also, although it is exercised by them much more rarely than by mankind.

Kuma appears also as the teacher of ethical laws. She told the people, told Hatchawa, and now tells the shamans: to live in peace with each other; to respect each other; to help each other; to live good lives; to take care of the parents-in-law and the children-in law. When the wife is ill or otherwise the mother-in-law should look after the needs of her son-in-law, although they do not speak to each other. The Yaruros will find recompense for such moral living after death. They are poor on this earth but will be rich like Kuma in the other world.

During my stay the women remained bashful, never speaking directly to me, and when I approached generally looking away. In the latter days they would laugh merrily as they fled. Their culture does not permit free social intercourse with men, but any request on my part relayed to them through their husbands or brothers was eagerly complied with, and with better than good humor.

All were helpful toward each other and there did not appear to be any dissension. Extreme care was taken that a person's rights and prerogatives were not infringed upon. The husband never seemed to request anything of his wife that did not lie in her province, and when strange demands were made to please me, entire freedom was given to the wife, or daughter, to do as it pleased her. Any misfortune, however slight or serious, that would produce some expression of anger among white people was met by the Yaruros with merry laughter. At night each family group lay on the sands